MEMORANDUM

December 2, 2008

TO: Health and Human Services Committee
Education Committee

FROM: Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: Kennedy Cluster Project Update

Today the Health and Human Services (HHS) Committee and the Education Committee will receive an update on the progress that has been made on the Kennedy Cluster Project. The following individuals are expected to attend and discuss this project with the Committees:

- Nancy Navarro, President, Board of Education
- Jerry Weast, Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools
- Charles Short, Special Assistant to the County Executive

Other representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and MCPS will also attend.

The mission of the Kennedy Cluster Project is to identify and address the institutional barriers impacting African American students' academic achievement. The last update on the Kennedy Cluster Project to the Committees occurred in April 2008 and highlighted data describing the needs of children and their families living in the Kennedy Cluster and community resources available to address these needs. Project representatives indicated that an assessment of barriers to service delivery and a strategic plan to address these concerns would be completed by the fall of 2008. The Committees requested this update to hear about the recommended strategies for addressing the achievement gap and what has been accomplished to date.

I.   PROGRAM UPDATE

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The November 26th Council Update Memorandum attached at ©1-6 reports on the accomplishments of the Project to date, recommendations for project expansion, and next steps. In addition to the numerous meetings of the Operational and Project Leadership groups and the data, research and reports compiled by consultants Shattuck and Associates, Inc. and Catalyst Health Concepts, the following Project accomplishments are highlighted for the Committees' review as follows:

- Improved communication and working relationships among County agencies has led to the development of a Memorandum of Understanding that allows information sharing among service providers about students and families needing support. Project representatives report that the MOU is in its final stages of editing and review and may be in place by the beginning of the second semester of this school year.
- This past summer, the Project implemented an open summer lunch program for any student in the Project area at Georgian Forest Elementary School in response to focus group feedback expressing the need for meals. A total of 851 meals were served at an average of 27 meals per day.
- The Health Department prioritized the scheduling of vision and hearing screenings and immunization clinics based on FARMS rates. This allows students in Project and other high poverty schools to have problems diagnosed and remedied earlier in the school year.
- A Family Resource Fair was held at Argyle Middle School in November 2008 and attracted over 100 families who received information about a variety of services including income supports, health care, and after school opportunities.
- Transportation was provided for families in the Project area to the County-sponsored Housing Fair in September 2008 in response to research that shows the 20906 zip code, which includes most of the Kennedy Cluster, as having the second highest number of foreclosures in the County.
- The three project elementary schools (Bel Pre, Georgian Forest, and Strathmore) continue to participate in the MCPS Professional Learning Communities Institute.
- All five project schools including Kennedy High School and Argyle Middle School continue to focus professional development on topics of institutional racism, equitable classroom practices, and growing an internal culture of high expectations.

PROJECT EXPANSION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Operational Group has developed recommendations and an implementation plan for expanding the project which is attached to the packet at ©16-19. Recommended activities are categorized by seven objectives including: (1) increased use of equitable practices; (2) improved student health and well-being; (3) increased parent engagement; (4) more students ready to learn; (5) sustained collaboration and communication among partners organizations; (6) a rich out-of-school environment for students; and (7) a decrease in involuntary housing factors that lead to

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student mobility. For each recommended activity, information on cost, timeline, responsible agency and expected outcomes is provided.

The following chart highlights recommendations that have associated cost implications. *Prioritized items* are bolded and italicized.

Objective/Activity	Cost Estimate	Timeline	Responsible Agency
Expand activity bus services: 1 bus to each ES and 2 to MS for 3 days/week for 4 weeks	$28,649	ASAP	MCPS
Expand summer meals program: summer open lunch at all sites with MCPS circulator buses	$115,000	2009	MCPS
Provide refurbished computers to qualifying families	$20,000	1/09	MCPS
Increase universal preschool opportunities for all 3 and 4 year olds	*$516,522*	*FY09*	*HHS/ESC/ MCPS*
Housing support for families collaborating w/ HHS Homeless Svcs	*$101,757*	*FY09*	*HHS*
Conduct resource fairs for 150 participants Printing, refreshments, giveaways Printing, equipment rental, food, promotional needs, overtime pay to process extra applications	 $800 $43,800	 11/2009 Fall 2010	HHS lead with participation from other providers or agencies
Operationalize Excel Beyond the Bell: *ES coordination & partner building (300)* *New slots to serve children and youth (100-125)* *Professional development & accountability (30 providers)*	*$345,330*	*FY09-FY10*	*Collaboration Council, Rec, DHHS, CUPF & others*
Expand Linkages to Learning (prevention, case management and mental health services) to Project Middle and Elementary Schools	*Year 1: $1,123,591* *Year 2: $1,358,956*	*FY10?*	*HHS, MCPS & Partner Nonprofit*
Provide a Parent Outreach Coordinator (.5 FTE) at each targeted school to improve communication, parent involvement and student outcomes	$303,811	FY10	MCPS
Create summer youth employment (job placement, career and skill development, job fairs) program for 100 youth	$80,000	FY10	Rec/DED/ OHR
Evaluate use of programmed after-school space	$60,000	FY10	Rec/CUPF
Project Evaluation	$150,000		
TOTAL	**$3,139,625**		

The implementation plan also describes a number of activities that do not require additional costs including:

Objective/Activity	Timeline	Responsible Agency
Develop interagency MOU for information sharing	5/08-10/08	HHS/MCPS
Schedule fall vision and hearing screenings	8/19/08-12/31/08	HHS
Assess need for Immunization clinic in schools	8/26/08-9/19/08	HHS
Continue operations group meetings	10/08-10/10	HHS
Evaluate alternative staffing strategies	2/2/09-4/1/09	MCPS
Include Project secondary schools in the Professional Learning Communities Institute	July 2009	MCPS
Working with landlords and property managers to intervene with tenants in danger of eviction (Housing First Initiative)	FY09	HHS

The current estimate for project expansion activities is approximately $3.1 million though there are two activities (i.e., cultural competency training for employees and nonprofits and co-location of the Gilchrist and Rocking Horse Road Center) whose cost have yet to be determined. Project representatives acknowledge that four priority items have substantial cost implications. Because of the current fiscal outlook, the Operational Group is developing a long-range time schedule for implementation of recommendations and will pursue alternative funding sources.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Impacts of Education on Personal and Societal Outcomes

The packet contains the documents prepared by Shattuck & Associates, Inc. as the consultant hired by MCPS. One report summarizes the impacts of education on personal and societal outcomes from literature. According to this report (©20-24), "the health and well-being of an individual drastically improves just by obtaining a high school diploma." Higher graduates are "likely to live longer, and are less likely to be teen parents, produce healthier and better educated children and rely less on social services."

The report highlights the significant impact that dropping out of high school has on society. It suggests that individuals who drop out of school will require social services including food stamps, housing assistance, TANF, and Medicaid, increase crime-related costs, and contribute less to the economy from lower earnings. One estimate included in the report suggests that at the current rate, more than 12 million students will drop out during the course of the next decade, resulting in a loss to the nation of $3 trillion. (©21). Another suggests that the value of public benefits resulting from additional tax revenues and reductions in public assistance and crime amount to almost $256,700 per new high school graduate. (©22)

The findings in the report suggest that investment in strategies to increase high school graduation is cost effective.

Strategies to Close the Achievement Gap

Shattuck & Associates also performed a comprehensive literature review of strategies to close the achievement gap, and excerpts of that report are attached at ©25-44. Full copies of the report have been distributed to Councilmembers and are on file with the Office of Legislative Information Services. Members of the public interested in reviewing the complete report may contact the office at 240-777-7910.

The report is "designed to assist MCPS in identifying additional strategies and approaches to ensure that all of its students have an equal opportunity to succeed in schools" (©29). The report explores causal factors within school control (e.g., teacher quality and expectations, student perceptions and experiences, and school policy and environment) and within community and family spheres (e.g., socio-economic status, parental influence, student mobility, and lack of access to resources) that contribute to the achievement gap.

The report highlights three levels of intervention identified in literature including school-based strategies, out-of-school time programs and initiatives, and collaborative approaches with key organizations and stakeholders. It then summarizes strategies that are being employed in Montgomery County to address the achievement gap (©39-43), and to make recommendations for stakeholders to consider in moving forward. These recommendations include (©44):

- Keeping current with research evaluating out-of-school time programs and collaborative efforts;
- Providing ongoing targeted professional development in areas of culturally responsive pedagogy within the context of professional learning communities;
- Developing a system to identify out-of-school time needs and leverage resources to meet the needs; and
- Working with a diverse group of stakeholders to prioritize strategies, starting small, staying focused, using best practices, and developing a collaborative system to plan, implement and evaluate strategies.

II. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Council staff highlights the following issues for the Committee's consideration:

Next Steps

- Given the current economic outlook, the Committees may want to encourage Project stakeholders to pursue all cost neutral recommendations and develop alternative resources to support Project objectives.

- The Committees may want to hear about next steps for the Project and how the Leadership and Operational Groups plan to move forward with items targeted for implementation in FY09 and requiring additional funding.

Cost Savings and Reallocation of Resources

- In prior discussions with the Committees, Project leaders suggested that in exploring how to make government work better, consideration would be given to making systems more efficient and reallocating resources before seeking new funding. It is not clear whether the cost neutral items in the implementation plan are supported by redirected funding resulting from system efficiencies. The Committees may want to seek comment from Project stakeholders about system changes or improved efficiencies that would result in cost savings that could be redirected to support Project activities.

Coordination with Existing Programs and Initiatives

- As the Project moves forward, it may be important for Project representatives to consider how the recommendations will be coordinated with existing programs and policies. For example, if the recommendation for Linkages to Learning expansion disrupts the

program's existing queue of expansion sites selected according to the program's poverty-based criteria, will there be an effort to work with the Linkages Advisory Group to determine the best way to implement this recommendation? Will there be an effort to coordinate expansion of universal preschool options with the future recommendations of the Council appointed Universal Preschool Implementation Work Group?

Targeted Strategies and Practices

- Many of the recommended objectives and activities propose to expand existing programs targeting low-income residents. Has there been any consideration to developing specific strategies or culturally directed practices to target particular populations (e.g., African American males, etc.)?

The packet contains the following attachments:

	Circle #
November 26th Council Update Memorandum from Project Managers	1-6
Kennedy Cluster Project Status Power Point	7-15
Implementation Plan for Kennedy Cluster Project 11-21-08	16-19
Impact of Education on Personal and Societal Outcomes	20-24
Excerpts from Literature Review on School-Based, Out-of-School Time, and Collaborative Strategies to Close the Academic Achievement	25-44
Flyer for Family Resource Fair Held on November 19, 2008	45

John F. Kennedy High School Cluster Disparities and Performance Project
Rockville, Maryland

November 26, 2008

MEMORANDUM

To: Ms. Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst
            Montgomery County Council

From: Fran Brenneman, Project Manager for Montgomery County Government
            Donald Kress, Project Manager for Montgomery County Public Schools

Subject: Update on the Kennedy Cluster Project

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on the work-to-date and current status of the John F. Kennedy High School Cluster Disparities and Performance Project (Kennedy Project).

Background

The Kennedy Project is a joint effort between the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and the Montgomery County Government to create a service delivery model for African American students that will accelerate the progress already under way to significantly improve academic achievement for these students. A project team, comprised of representatives from MCPS and various county and state agencies, is working collaboratively to eliminate communication barriers between and among the school system and county departments and agencies, and to identify the services necessary to address the root causes and barriers that inhibit or discourage African American students from achieving their full academic potential. In addition to identifying changes and services that may be needed within the schools, the project team is working to develop and provide recommendations to the county government regarding the coordinated services needed to complement educational services within the Kennedy Project area.

Previous updates to the County Council focused on what we had learned since the Project's inception about the demographics of the Kennedy Cluster and the unique issues faced by African Americans within the Project area. This update will focus on what the Project has accomplished to date, and what leaders of the Project believe needs to happen in the future to enable the Project to achieve its goal of reducing the academic disparity in the Kennedy Project schools between African American and other students.

Accomplishments to Date

The following elements of the Kennedy Project are in place as of this date:

- The three project elementary schools (Bel Pre, Georgian Forest, and Strathmore) continue to participate in the MCPS Professional Learning Communities Institute (PLCI).

- All five project schools (John F. Kennedy High School; Argyle Middle School; and Bel Pre, Georgian Forest, and Strathmore elementary schools) continue to focus professional development on the topics of institutional racism and equitable classroom practices, and the growth of an internal culture of high expectations. This professional development is being directly supported by the Diversity Training and Development Team, Office of Organizational Development, under the leadership of Ms. Donna Graves, supervisor.

- Shattuck and Associates was contracted by MCPS and began work in January 2008 on collecting data and summarizing the research on the achievement gap. Their work, now completed, consisted of conducting focus groups within the Kennedy Cluster involving students, staff, and parents to gather perceptions of causes and barriers contributing to the achievement gap and to identify needed services and supports; preparing a thorough review of the literature regarding causal factors of the achievement gap and identifying strategies that have proven successful in closing the gap (attached); and, preparing a cost/benefit analysis related to efforts in closing the achievement gap (attached).

- Catalyst Health Concepts, contracted by the Department of Health and Human Services, led the collection of data regarding this community and the public and non-profit services provided to its residents. Their work, now completed, included conducting focus groups involving members of county departments and other agencies and groups providing services within the Kennedy Cluster.

- The Kennedy Cluster Operational Group (project team), comprised of MCPS staff and leaders of key county and state agencies, has been meeting not less than bi-monthly, and often weekly, to review the data as it is collected and to formulate recommendations. The team has met twenty-nine times between November 13, 2007, and December 5, 2008. The Operational Group reports to the Project Leadership Group, which consists of Mrs. Valerie Ervin, County Council member, Mrs. Nancy Navarro, Board of Education member, Mr. Chuck Short, Special Assistant to the County Executive, and Dr. Jerry Weast, Superintendent of Schools. The Operational Group has met with the Leadership seven times to date. The Leadership Group and selected members of the Operational Group have provided two briefings to the County Executive (most recently on September 22, 2008), and two briefings to the County Council. This is the third briefing provided to the County Council. A briefing is scheduled to be given to the Board of Education on December 9, 2008.

- Perhaps the greatest accomplishment to date is the improved communication and working relationships that have developed among the agencies involved in the Project. There is a much better understanding throughout all county agencies of the complex issues around the achievement gap, and an acceptance that each agency can play some role in addressing causal factors. There is a spirit of collaboration among state and county agencies and MCPS that we have not experienced prior to the beginning of this Project. We believe that the Kennedy Project will stand as a national model for collaborative efforts to close the achievement gap.

- Collaboration to its greatest effectiveness requires the sharing of information about students and their families among various service providers. Federal laws (FERPA, HIPAA) and state regulations place restrictions on the ability for agencies to share anything beyond directory information. Attorneys for the County and MCPS have been working with appropriate agency heads to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will help address some of those restrictions. That MOU is in its final stages of editing and review, and will hopefully be in place by the beginning of the second semester of this school year.

- One of the things heard from students during the focus groups was the need for meals. As a result, the Project implemented an open summer lunch program for any students in the Project area. That program, held at Georgian Forest Elementary School, began on June 16, 2008, and continued through August 15, 2008. Despite the fact that the decision to have this program wasn't finalized until the last day of school for students, resulting in a limited ability to send information about the program home with students, and transportation for the program wasn't added until June 30, 2008, a total of 851 meals were served, an average of 27 per day.

- During its exploration of issues, the Operational Group learned that the 20906 Zip Code, which includes most of the Kennedy Project, has the county's second highest number of foreclosures (20874 has the highest), and that 70% of people in Montgomery County who are faced with foreclosure never talk to their lender or to a foreclosure counselor. Coincidentally, the county government was sponsoring a Housing Fair on September 27, 2008, at Bohrer Park in Gaithersburg. Information about this fair was sent home with students in the Project schools, and MCPS provided a bus between the Project area and Bohrer Park.

- In the past, the county's Health Department has conducted annual vision and hearing screening and immunization clinics in schools, with schools being scheduled in a random manner. This school year, as a recommendation of the Operational Group, these screenings were prioritized based on the FARMS ranking of schools. The result is that several students in Kennedy Project schools, and other high poverty schools, were able to have problems diagnosed and remedied much earlier in the school year that in the past. This practice will be continued in the future.

- In a collaborative effort in support of the Project, a Family Resource Fair was held at Argyle Middle School on the evening of November 19, 2008. Over one-hundred families attended, receiving information about rental and energy assistance, food stamps and medical assistance, after-school enrichment and recreational opportunities, services for children with disabilities, health services for the uninsured, and many other services and resources. A MCPS bus provided transportation between the school and apartment complexes in the Bel Pre-Hewitt Corridor. Information about the fair, both in English and Spanish, was sent home with students in the Project schools. (Attached)

- We were recently informed that the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland has agreed to assign nine graduate students to help with the Project in whatever way deemed appropriate by the Operational Group.

Recommendations for Project Expansion

The Operational Group recently completed a set of recommendations and implementation plans for activities which they believe are needed to effectively reduce the achievement gap in the Kennedy Project. These recommendations were presented to the Leadership Group on November 14, 2008, and will be presented to the joint Health and Human Services and Education Committees of the County Council on December 4, 2008, and to the Board of Education on December 9, 2008. Prioritized recommendations are:

- Priority 1 – Expand Linkages to Learning to all Project middle and elementary schools

- Priority 2 – Provide full-day universal Pre-K for all 4-year olds in the Project area

- Priority 3* – Fully operationalize Excel Beyond the Bell in the Project middle and elementary schools

- Priority 3* – Collaborate with Health and Human Services Homeless Services to provide housing support for families in the Project area

        * The Operational Group was unable to reach a consensus on which of these was of higher priority.

Other non-prioritized recommendations include:

- Develop and implement cultural competency training for county and non-profit employees providing services within the project area

- Include Project secondary schools in the MCPS Professional Learning Communities Institute

- Explore alternative staffing strategies in the Project schools

- Expand the summer meals program

- Provide a 0.5 parent outreach coordinator at each Project school

- Conduct additional resource fairs

- Co-locate the Gilchrist and Rocking Horse Road Centers

- Provide refurbished MCPS computers to qualifying families within the Project area

- Heighten focus on the county's Positive Youth Development Initiative through the existing Kennedy Cluster Community-Based Collaborative

- Evaluate the use of programmed after-school space in the Project schools

- Expand activity bus service within the Project area

- As a component of the Housing First Initiative, collaborate with landlords, property managers and property management firms to engage in activities that will help them effectively intervene with tenants who are in danger of being evicted

While some of these recommendations can be implemented at little cost, many – especially the four prioritized items – have substantial cost implications at a time when budgets are being cut. The Operational Group realizes this fact, and is in the process of developing long-range time schedules for the implementation of their recommendations. (Additional information on these recommendations is attached.) Certainly these recommendations will be items of discussion in this year's and future years' budget deliberations.

Next Steps

The Operational Group will continue to discus appropriate ways to collaborate around the goal of the Project. As stated previously, they will be working on multi-year timelines for the implementation of their recommendations. They will also be meeting with local businesses and organizations to pursue possible alternative means of funding some of their recommendations. When the MOU is finalized, client-specific information can begin being shared among multiple agencies and collaboration will begin around service to individual students and their families. The group will begin working with non-profit organizations that are currently providing services within the Project area, as well as others from whom services may be desirable, to include them in Project efforts. The Operational Group has recently formed a multi-agency committee to design an evaluation for the Project. The evaluation questions being addressed are:

- Do the efforts of MCPS and county agencies to enhance equitable educational practices and parent engagement, as well as health and social services for students in

the Kennedy Project schools, contribute to closing the achievement gap between white and African-American students?

- o Hypothesis 1: African-American students enrolled in Kennedy Project schools will perform more comparably to white students at Grades 5, 8 and 12 than their counterparts in demographically-similar schools.
- o Hypothesis 2: African-American students enrolled in Kennedy Project schools who receive intensive services (as indicated under the MOU) will perform more comparably to white students at Grades 5, 8 and 12 than their counterparts in demographically-similar schools.

- Can we determine which services are most productive in terms of closing the achievement gap between white and African-American students?

Conclusion

The Kennedy Project represents a new systemic response to children and families by the Montgomery County Government and MCPS. The Project recognizes that student achievement does not just happen in the schoolhouse, and that closing the achievement gap for African American students will require a commitment of services from multiple agencies. We have been pleased to watch the school system and the county agencies that are participating in the Kennedy Project look beyond their individual silos. We are impressed with their accomplishments to date as they work together at the difficult task of closing the achievement gap.

At the table on December 4 to provide more information and respond to Council members' questions about the Kennedy Project will be Ms. Navarro, Mr. Short, Dr. Weast, and Mr. Kress. Other members of the Project's Operational Group will be present in the audience.
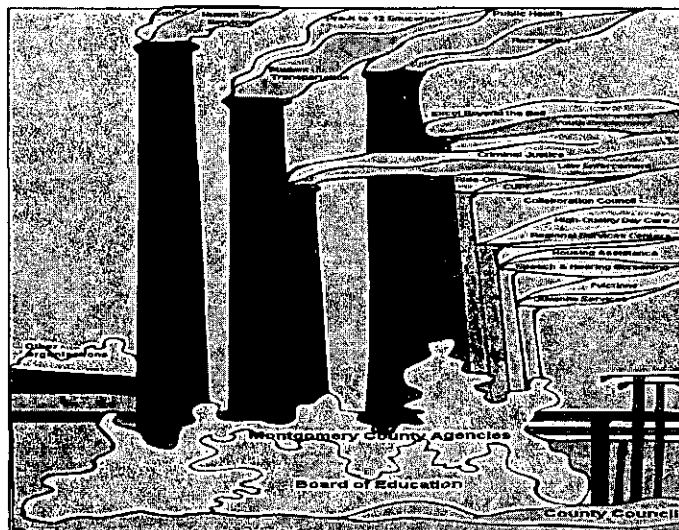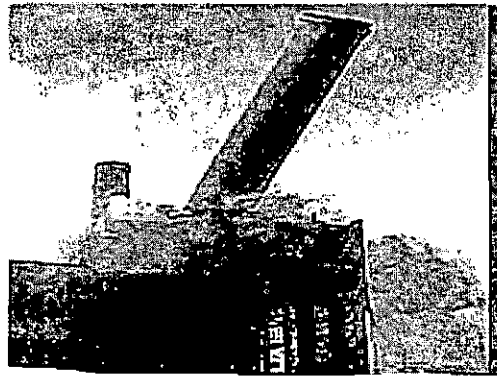
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Attachments

Project Status

The Kennedy Cluster Project
December 2008

Business as Usual

The Kennedy Project:

Bringing Smokestacks Down!

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

the

KENNEDY-CLUSTER
Project

Working Together to Close the Achievement Gap

Demographics

- **Kennedy Cluster**

  - **44.7% White**
  - **28.9% African American**
  - **12.7% Asian**
  - **18.1% Hispanic**

  - **36.6% foreign-born**

- **Montgomery County**

  - **64.8% White**
  - **15.1% African American**
  - **11.3% Asian**
  - **11.5% Hispanic**

  - **26.7% foreign-born**

Demographics

- **Kennedy Cluster**

  - **55% have high school diploma or less**
  - **21.6% have BA/BS**
  - **17.9% have graduate degree**

  - **29.7% of kids live in single-parent family**
  - **11.2% of children live below the poverty level**
  - **48.9% FARMS**

- **Montgomery County**

  - **40.9% have high school diploma or less**
  - **27.1% have BA/BS**
  - **27.5% have graduate degree**

  - **18.4% of kids live in single-parent family**
  - **6.2% of children live below the poverty level**
  - **25.8% FARMS**

Kennedy Project Deliberations

● **Illustrative meeting topics include:**
- **Causes of the achievement gap**
- **Characteristics of the Kennedy Cluster**
- **Resources in the Cluster (e.g., CSAFE)**
- **Collaboration Issues (e.g., MOU, FERPA/HIPAA)**
- **Issues in the Kennedy Cluster**
  - **Access to health care and social services**
  - **Evictions/Foreclosures**
  - **Hunger**
  - **Transportation**

Kennedy Project Deliberations

● **26 Operational Group meetings, 12/7/07-11/7/08**
● **6 MCPS Project Team meetings, 11/13/07-5/13/08 (Project Team was merged with Operational Group)**
● **7 Leadership Group meetings, 10/24/07-11/14/08**
● **2 County Executive briefings, 8/24/07 & 9/22/08**
● **2 Board of Education briefings, 3/11/08 & 12/9/08**
● **3 County Council briefings, 12/10/07, 4/16/08 & 12/4/08**

Organizations/Groups Consulted

- Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County
- Aspen Hill Library
- Booz Allen Hamilton
- Commonweal Foundation
- Crittenton Services of Greater Washington
- GapBuster Learning Center
- George B. Thomas Academy
- Hewitt/Bel Pre Community Creating Opportunities for Youth
- Iterages/Grandreaders
- Men of Distinction
- Mental Health Association/Kensington-Wheaton Youth Services
- Mid-County Advisory Board
- Passion for Learning
- Task Force on Mentoring of Montgomery County

Goal and Objectives

- Reduce the academic disparity in the Kennedy Cluster of schools between African American and other students
  - There will be an increase in the use of equitable practices
  - There will be improved student health and well-being
  - There will be more parent engagement
  - There will be more students ready to learn
  - There will be sustained collaboration in providing information and communication among partners that work with Kennedy Cluster students
  - There will be a rich out-of-school environment for students
  - There will be a decrease in the involuntary housing-related factors that lead to student mobility

Accomplishments to Date

- Focus Group meetings with school staff, students, parents, community groups and organizations to understand their issues, needs, desires
- Detailed analysis of data on several indicators across agencies
- A better understanding of the characteristics and programmatic needs of the Project community
- A better understanding of causal factors of the achievement gap and strategies that have proven to be effective in closing the gap

Accomplishments to Date

- Improved communication and collaboration among MCPS, county, and state agencies
- A plan and MOU for exchanging client-specific information among agencies involved in the Project
- Equitable practices training for staff in Project schools, and discussion about equity issues and the need for such training for staff in county agencies
- Open summer lunch program for students in the Project area – 851 meals served (average of 27 per day)

Accomplishments to Date

- **Transportation provided to/from the County Housing Fair at Bohrer Park (9/27/08)**
- **Vision & Hearing screening and Immunization checks in schools prioritized based on FARMS rankings**
- **Family Resource Fair at Argyle MS, with transportation provided (11/19/08)**
- **Commitment from U of MD School of Public Policy to provide assistance through nine graduate students**

Recommended Activities

- **Priority 1 – Expand Linkages to Learning to all Project middle and elementary schools**
- **Priority 2 – Provide full-day universal Pre-K for all 4-year olds in the Project area**
- **Priority 3 – Fully operationalize Excel Beyond the Bell in the Project middle and elementary schools**
- **Priority 3 – Collaborate with HHS Homeless Services to provide housing support for families in the Project area**

Other Recommended Activities (not prioritized)

- Develop cultural competency training for county and non-profit employees providing services within the Project area
- Include Project secondary schools in the MCPS Professional Learning Communities Institute
- Explore alternative staffing strategies in the Project schools
- Expand the summer meals program
- Provide a 0.5 Parent Outreach Coordinator at each Project school
- Conduct additional resource fairs
- Co-locate Gilchrist and Rocking Horse Road Centers

Other Recommended Activities (not prioritized)

- Provide refurbished MCPS computers to qualifying families within the Project area
- Heighten focus on the county's Positive Youth Development Initiative through the existing Kennedy Cluster Community Based Collaborative
- Evaluate the use of programmed after-school space in the Project schools
- Expand activity bus service within the Project area
- As a component of the Housing First Initiative, collaborate with landlords, property managers and property management firms to engage them in activities that will help them effectively intervene with tenants who are in danger of being evicted

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Project Evaluation

- **Evaluation Questions**
  - Do the efforts of MCPS and county agencies to enhance equitable educational practices and parent engagement, as well as health and social services for students in the Kennedy Project schools, contribute to closing the achievement gap between white and African-American students?
    - Hypothesis 1: African-American students enrolled in Kennedy Project schools will perform more comparably to white students at Grades 5, 8 and 12 than their counterparts in demographically-similar schools.
    - Hypothesis 2: African-American students enrolled in Kennedy Project schools who receive intensive services (as indicated under the MOU) will perform more comparably to white students at Grades 5, 8 and 12 than their counterparts in demographically-similar schools.
  - Can we determine which services are most productive in terms of closing the achievement gap between white and African-American students?

Only a Memory!

Implementation Plan for Kennedy Cluster Project 11-21-08

Goal: Reduce the academic disparity in the Kennedy cluster of schools between African American and other students.

Objectives/Activities	Cost Estimate	Timeline	Dept./Agency Responsible	Expected Results
Obj. 1: There will be an increase in the use of equitable practices.				
a. Develop cultural competency for employees and non-profits.	$tbd	9/08-continue	HHS/OCP/REC	Cultural training for employees and non-profits who work in the Kennedy Cluster.
b. Include Project secondary schools in the MCPS Professional Learning Communities Institute	$0 (PLCI is already included in the MCPS Operating Budget)	July 2009	MCPS Office of Organizational Development	Argyle MS will be included in the next middle school cohort of the MCPS Professional Learning Communities Institute. Kennedy HS should be included in the first cohort if/when a high school PLCI curriculum is developed.
c. Evaluate alternative staffing Strategies.	$0	2/2/09 4/1/09	MCPS Offices of School Performance & Human Resources	The responsible offices, principals of the Project schools, and MCEA will agree to staffing policies, procedures, and incentives that will enhance the quality of staff in the Project schools.
Obj. 2: There will be improved student health & well-being.				
a. Expand Linkages to Learning to all project middle and elementary schools **#1**	FY 10 (startup year) -$1,122,591 Year 2: $1,358,956 (see attached estimate	Full implementation of all sites within 6 months of funding becoming available (i.e. 7/1/09-1/1/10)	HHS, MCPS & Partner Agency (vendor)	Non-academic barriers to learning will be addressed for identified students via delivery of prevention, case management and/or mental health services that seek to improve social/emotional well-being, school functioning, and family self-sufficiency. Serves all children/families in Elem and Middle schools.
b. Schedule fall vision and hearing screenings. 775 students will be screened	$0	8/19/08-12/31/08	HHS-School Health	Students will be referred as needed to specialist and will be seated in front of class. **Serves all children/families in Elem, Middle, and High School schools.**
c. Assess Need for Immunization Clinics in Schools.	$0 Vaccines are free	8/26/2008 – 9/19/08	HHS-School Health	Students who need vac's will have access/all students will be in compliance **Serves all children/families in Elem, Middle, and High School schools.**
d. Expand Summer Meals Program	$115,000	Summer	MCPS Food	Summer Open Lunch

	(annually)	2009	Service & Transportation	Programs would operate at Kennedy HS, Argyle MS, Georgian Forest, Bel Pre and Strathmore ESs, with MCPS circulator busses serving each site.
Obj. 3: There will be more parent engagement.				
a. Provide a Parent Outreach Coordinator at each targeted school (.5 FTE)	**$303,811** (annually) salaries and benefits for five 0.5 FTE 12-month positions	FY 10	MCPS Office of School Performance & Dept. of Family & Community Partnerships	Improved communication between parents and their child's school Increased parent involvement at each school On-going parent education opportunities at each school Improved student attendance Reduction in student suspensions Increased student achievement Parents will report an increased awareness of how to access county services
Obj. 4: There will be more students ready to learn.				
a. Increase universal pre-school opportunities for all 3- and 4-year olds **#2**	**516,522**	FY09	HHS/ESC/MCPS	All children ready to learn school as defined by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Children Ready to Learn data
Obj. 5: There will be sustained collaboration among partners in providing information and communication that work with Kennedy Cluster students.				
a. Conduct resource fairs.	**$800** (printing, water, light refreshments, giveaways for children/families) **$43,800** ($20,000 for printing, equipment rental, food, logistics, promotional needs; $23,800 for overtime pay for staff to process extra applications resulting from Resource/Benefits Fair)	Nov 2009 Sept/Oct 2010	HHS will lead and solicit participation from other relevant private or government reps. HHS will lead but will also solicit participation and resources from other relevant private and community service providers.	• 150 participants attending the fair • At least 20% of the people attending the fair will receive applicatons to HHS programs. • 20% of benefits applications are to be returned to HHS within 60 days of completion of fair • At least 15 programs will bring information to the fair. • At least 50 % of the attendees will complete a Survey to help understand usefulness of information, and to inform the Benefits Enrollment Fair planned for Fall of 2009. # of people reached at Fair with information on services and programs;

				# of people referred to services and programs; # of applications completed and submitted at Fair; # of applications approved for services # exhibitors and programs participating
b. Co-locate Gilchrist and Rocking Horse Centers.	TBD	7/09		
c. Develop inter-Agency MOU for information sharing.	$0	5/08-10/08	HHS/MCPS	Gov't will be able to provide more effective and efficient services through info sharing.
d. Continue operation group meetings.	$0	10/08-10-10	HHS	Shared project accountability/shared problem solving among agencies
Obj. 6: There will be a rich out-of-school environment for students.				
a. Fully operationalize Excel Beyond the Bell (EBB) **#3** ES Coordination and partner building: 300 youth Estimated number of new "slots" to serve children and youth: At least 100-125 (based on $2000-2500/youth for $250,000 requested) Estimated number of out-of-school time providers who participate in professional development activities & accountability (program performance data collection): at least 20 Estimated number of youth impacted by these providers: At least 600 (average of 30 youth/provider)	**345,330	FY 2009 and FY 2010	Collaboration Council as the intermediary with a Partnership Group that includes Recreation, DHHS, CUPF, and several other public & private agency representation	Increased number of youth participating in quality programs; 2 Increase in the variety of quality programs and opportunities; 3 Better allocation of public and private resources to fit comm. needs and youth preferences; 4 increased funding and sustainability of programs and system infrastructure— All resulting in positive youth development including physical, social/emotional and academic/intellectual growth!
b. Provide Refurbished Computers.	**$20,000** 2,000 computers @ $10 each.	1/09	MCPS Division of Technology	The availability of technology within the Project area will be increased through the distribution of refurbished MCPS computers to qualifying families.
c. Heighten Focus on the County's Positive Youth Development Initiative through the existing Kennedy Cluster Community Based Collaborative (Community Outreach and Education)	**$15,000**	FY'10	Regional Youth Service Center, MCPD, MCPS, HHS, Rec, Collaboration Council, MCPL	Increased participation from representatives from the public, private, and non-profit sectors (3 in each area per meeting) Increase youth participation (by 10 students per meeting) Increased knowledge of community resources and assets (participants to receive no less than two additional available opportunities) We average about 60 (at least 20 of those at students) people

				per meeting – 4 meetings per year -- 240 people per year
d. Create Summer Youth Employment Program.	$80,000	FY'10	Rec/DED/OHR	# of youth placed in jobs Skills learned # of job opportunities # of job fairs career knowledge **Serve 100 kids**
e. Evaluate use of programmed after-school space.	$60,000	FY'10	Rec/CUPF	# of programs # of youth served
f. Expand activity bus services	$28,649 After-School Activities Coordinator: $8,049 (using the same stipend as the current middle school Athletic Coordinator: $2,683) – Excel Beyond the Bell already provides such a position for Argyle M.S. Activity Busses: $20,600 ($75 per activity bus per day; providing service 3 days per week for 32 weeks	ASAP	MCPS Department of Transportation	Provide 1 activity bus to each elementary school and 2 to the middle school for 3 days per week for an additional 4 weeks.
Obj. 7: There will be a decrease in the involuntary housing-related factors that lead to student mobility.				
a. . As a component of the Housing First Initiative, collaborate with landlords, property managers and property management firms to engage them in activities that will help them effectively intervene with tenants who are in danger of being evicted.	$0	FY 09	HHS/SNH	compiling the number of evictions in the Kennedy Cluster area the numbers of meetings held and the feedback received from landlords
b. Collaborate with HHS Homeless Services to provide housing support for families **#3** 30 to 35 families at a time	$101,757	FY 09	HHS/SNH	# of grants issued # of cases managed

Total $2,989645
Evaluation of project   **150,000**

TOTAL $3,139,645.00

**EBtB does not include transportation costs or leased space
*LTL- includes full 5 day sites at each school with infrastructure

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Impacts of Education on Personal and Societal Outcomes

A great deal of the cost-benefit literature looking at the effects of education on individual and societal outcomes explores the relative impacts of graduating from high school versus dropping out of high school. This summary briefly presents highlights from the literature of the impact of education on personal and societal outcomes. Each table presents general findings followed by the cost of low academic achievement or dropping out of high school, and the benefits of high academic achievement, completing high school high school, and/or pursuing higher education. It is worth noting that cost-benefit analyses tend to be extremely complex and very expensive to conduct so they are seldom undertaken. In addition, the results of the same analyses can be interpreted and presented quite differently depending on who is conducting the research. For example, a report of the cost-benefit of the Perry Preschool program indicated that for every dollar spent, four dollars we're saved in social costs by the time the child was 27 years of age. A second report of the same program indicated a savings of 17 dollars for every dollar spent. Such discrepancies in the literature are not uncommon and are likely attributable to the manner in which costs and benefits are calculated.

Overview:

- Every nine seconds in America a student becomes a dropout.
- Nationally, only about two-thirds of all students who enter 9th grade graduate with regular high school diplomas four years later. For minority males, these figures are far lower. In 2001, on average, only 64% of African American males graduated from high school compared to 72% of African American females.
- Among students who fail to graduate with their peers, one-quarter eventually earn a diploma and one-quarter earn a GED; about one-half earn no high school credential.
- An unfortunate correlate to dropping out of high school is involvement in the criminal justice system.
  - o Students who fail to graduate from high school are more likely to engage in criminal activity than students who do graduate. Likewise, students with low levels of achievement in high school are more likely to engage in crime than students with high levels of achievement. Investing in education would save millions of dollars *in crime related expenditures annually.*
  - o Roughly 75% of state prison inmates are dropouts, as are 59% of federal inmates; dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates *to be incarcerated* in their lifetime.

American Youth Policy Forum, 2006

Personal Impacts of Education: Health

General

- Evidence suggests that the health and well-being of an individual drastically improves just by obtaining a high school diploma. High school graduates live longer, are less likely to be teen parents, produce healthier and better educated children, and rely less on social services (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006).
- For black males aged 18-24, the gradients of public coverage are steep: 81% of those with less than 9 years of education have publicly reimbursed health care compared to 28% of college graduates. Over the lifetime, it is estimated the savings in public health costs for each high school graduate relative to dropout at about $33,500 in present value terms at age 20 using a 3.5 percent discount rate (Levin et al., 2007).

Benefits*

- Male and female students with low academic achievement are twice as likely to become parents by their senior year of high school compared to students with high academic achievement.
- Teen girls in the bottom 20 % of *basic reading and math skills are five times* more likely to become mothers over a two-year high school period than teen girls in the top 20%.

- Higher levels of schooling among parents are positively correlated with better levels of health in infants and children, specifically lower rates of infant mortality and low birth weight.
- Education means better health. The U.S. death rate for those with fewer than twelve years of education is 2.5 times higher than the rate of those with thirteen years of education or more.
- High school graduation is positively related to lower mortality rates, and lower medical-care time and money expenditures.

*Source for Costs & Benefits: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a.

Prepared by Shattuck & Associates, Inc. for MCPS, DRAFT, 07-14-08 - Page1

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Personal Impacts of Education: Higher Education/Employment/Income

General

- In 2001, the National Association of Manufacturers reported that, despite the slowing economy, 80% of manufacturers continue to experience a moderate-to-serious shortage of qualified job candidates. Of the survey's participants, 78% believed that public schools are failing to prepare students for the workplace (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003b).
- American business currently spends more than $60 billion each year on training, much of that on remedial reading, writing, and mathematics (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006).

Higher Education

- In 2003, 80% of students from families with incomes in the upper 20% (highest quintile) enrolled in college immediately after high school compared to 65% from the second highest quintile and 61% of those from the middle-income quintile (Education Pays, 2005).

Employment

- The U.S. military no longer accepts high school dropouts. Only 10% of army recruits, 6% of navy recruits, and less than 1% of air force recruits are accepted with a GED (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c).
- An estimated 3.8 million youth ages 18-24 are neither employed nor in school. That comprises 15% of all young adults. From 2000 to 2004, this number grew by 700,000 (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006).
- High school dropouts are unable to enter the workforce with the necessary skills to meet the demands of the nation's global economy. Jobs that require advanced skills are growing; students who attain higher levels of education will have better employment opportunities and increased income (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c).
- Unless high schools are able to graduate their students at higher rates, more than 12 million students will drop out during the course of the next decade. The result will be a loss to the nation of $3 trillion (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).

Income

- The earning power of dropouts has been in almost continuous decline over the past three decades. In 1971, male dropouts earned $35,087 (in 2002 dollars), but this fell 35% to $23, 903 in 2002. Earnings for female dropouts fell from $19,888 to $17,114 (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006).

Benefits

- If the students who dropped out of the class of 2007 had graduated, the nation's economy would have benefited from an additional $329 billion in income over their lifetimes (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).
- Children in the lowest-income families were more than twice as likely as children in the highest-income families to have school absences of eleven or more days (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a).
- In school year 2000-2001, high school students from low income families (the lowest 20%) dropped out of school at six times the rate of their peers from higher-income families (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006).
- In 2001, only 55% of young adult dropouts were employed, compared with 74% of high school graduates and 87% of four-year college graduates (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006).
- Eight years after their scheduled high school graduation dates, 75% of the 1988 8th graders who were high math achievers from the lowest SES had enrolled in college, but only 29% had earned bachelor's degrees (Education Pays, 2005).
- Maryland had 78,690 9th graders in 2003-04, of those it is estimated that 74.7% of them will graduate in 2006/07. It is estimated that 19,909 will dropout for the class of 2007. The total lifetime additional income if dropouts graduated with their class is $5,176,228,200 (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).

- The benefit/cost ratio ranges from about two to four among the alternatives, meaning that for every dollar invested in raising high school completion among black males, there are two to four dollars in public benefits (Levin, 2007).
- Employment projections indicate that jobs requiring only a high school degree will grow by just 9% by the year 2008, while those requiring a bachelor's degree will grow by 25% and those requiring an associate's degree will grow by 31% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003d).
- Among the students from the highest socioeconomic quartile with similar high levels of achievement in math in 8th grade, 99% had enrolled in college and 74% had earned bachelor's degrees by the year 2000 (Education Pays, 2005).
- The average annual income for a high school dropout in 2005 was $17,299, compared to $26,933 for a high school graduate, a difference of $9,534 (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).
- A college graduate with a bachelor's degree can expect to earn $650,000 more in a lifetime than he or she would earn with only a high school diploma; the same person would earn $1 million more with a master's and $1.6 million more with a doctorate (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c).
- Increased college participation would reduce the percentage of Hispanic families in poverty from 41% to 21%, and reduce the number of African American families in poverty from 33% to 24% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).
- Increasing minority students' participation in college to the same percent as that of white students would create an additional $231 billion GDP and at least $80 billion in new tax revenues (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003d).

Societal Impacts of Education: Social Services

General

- The value of just the public benefits embodied in *additional* tax revenues and reductions in the cost of public health and crime amount to almost $256,700 per new high school graduate (Levin, 2007).

- Individuals who fail to complete high school will require social services such as welfare and Medicaid, thus increasing monetary demands on local, state, and federal revenues. Evidence shows that investing in education would yield a decrease in poverty and homelessness, reducing public expenditures on these social services (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).

- Reforming the nation's high schools could potentially increase the number of graduates and, as a result, significantly reduce the nation's crime-related costs and add billions of dollars to the economy through the additional wages they would earn (Justice Policy Institute, 2007).

- Increasing the number of graduates with a quality education will raise national revenues and will reduce billions of dollars in public and private expenditures currently spent on rectifying the shortcomings of a failed high school education (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006).

- Dropouts contribute to state and federal tax coffers at only about one-half the rate of high school graduates; over a working lifetime about $60,000 less, or $50 billion less annually for the 23 million high school non-completers, ages 18-67 (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c).

- For each additional black male high school dropout the net public benefit in present value at age 20 is between $136,400 and $197,600. For a median intervention, the net present value is $166,000, which is over ten times the cost of delivering the average intervention to one single student (Levin, 2007).

- Federal investments in second-chance education and training fell from $15 billion in the late 1970's to $3 billion (inflation-adjusted) today (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006).

Benefits

- The US would save $41.8 billion in health care costs if the 600,000 young people who dropped out in 2004 were to complete one additional year of education. If only one-third of high school dropouts were to earn a high school diploma, federal savings in reduced costs for *food stamps, housing assistance,* and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families would amount to $10.8 billion annually (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).

- America could save more than $17 billion in Medicaid and expenditures for health care for the uninsured by graduating all students (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).

- The US could save between $7.9 and $10.8 billion annually by improving educational attainment among all recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, food stamps, and housing assistance (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).

- In present values for a black male aged 20, public benefits amount to $256,700 per new graduate and a median intervention would cost only $90,700. The benefit/cost ratio is 2.83. Simply equating the high school graduation rate of black males with that of white males would yield public savings of $3.98 billion for each age cohort (Levin, 2007).

- Dropouts are substantially more likely to rely on public assistance than those with a high school diploma. The estimated lifetime *revenue loss for male dropouts ages 25-34* is $944 billion. The cost to the public of their crime and welfare benefits is estimated to total $24 billion annually (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).

- A black male dropout contributes $118,000 in income taxes over his lifetime; the respective figures are $222,400 for high school graduates and $607,000 for college graduates. To this we add property tax and sales taxes, which increase all values by 5%. Overall, the present value at age 20 of the extra tax revenue associated with each additional high school graduate would be about $167,600. Therefore, higher tax revenue alone would pay for 5 interventions ($2,900–13,100 per intervention) (Levin, 2007).

- 5% of students with some college have received government assistance compared to 10% of students with a high school diploma and 24% who failed to receive a high school diploma (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).

Societal Impacts of Education: Incarceration

General

- The US has surpasses all other countries in the number of percentage of adults it presently incarcerates, now roughly 2.3 million people (Price, 2006), or 1 in 100 US adults (Liptak, 2008). The US spends more on corrections than it does on the Department of Education, the Environmental Protection Agency, and foreign aid (minus Iraq) combined. In the 1980s, state-level spending on corrections increased 95%, while spending on higher education decreased by 6%. This trend continued into the 1990s as the US appropriated more money for building prisons than it did for building classrooms. The last 15 years has brought an increase on state spending on corrections by 350 percent, compared to an increase of 250 percent for public welfare and 140 percent for education. In spite of all this spending, a great many prisons are over capacity (Price, 2006).

- Nearly 1/3 of state prisoners report having a learning or speech disability, a hearing or vision problem, or a mental or physical condition (Schiraldi, 2003).

- A male high school graduate with a D average is fourteen times more likely to become incarcerated than a graduate with an A average (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006).

Race (white/black)

- *"We must confront another reality. Nationwide, more than 40% of the prison population consists of African-American inmates. About 10% of African-American men in their mid-to-late 20's are behind bars. In some cities, more than 50% of young African American men are under the supervision of the criminal justice system...our resources are misspent, our punishments too severe, our sentences too long."* (Justice Anthony Kennedy, speaking at the American Bar Association, August, 2003)

- *"The sad reality in the United States is that despite representing only 5% of the world's population, America imprisons more people than any other nation. Most are of color-most are poor. Most had inadequate legal representation and most dropped out or were pushed out of school. We must become disturbed by these disparities and move to action."* (Reverend Jessie Jackson, Sr., Speaking in Chicago, Illinois, April, 2003)

- Overall rates of incarceration for black males are 6 to 8 times those of white males (Levin, 2007).

- Among African American males, the average rate of institutionalization for ages 18-65 is 8%; the rate for dropouts is 19% (or roughly 25% for younger cohorts); 8% for high school graduates, and 1% for college graduates (Levin, 2007).

- African American men are disproportionately incarcerated. Of all African American male dropouts in their early 30's, 52% have been imprisoned. Ninety percent of the 11,000 youth in adult detention facilities have no more than a 9th grade education (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006).

- In Maryland, African Americans comprise 76% of the prison population, yet only 28% of the state's total population; in 2000, 1 in 18 African American adult men (18-64) was incarcerated; previous studies showed that half of all young African American men in Baltimore were under criminal justice control (Schiraldi, 2003).

Benefits	Benefits
- In the US, the average annual per capita cost of incarceration is $24,440; roughly 2 ½ times the average cost of education per pupil - $9295 (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2008).	- A 1% increase in high school graduation rates would save approximately $1.4 billion in costs associated with incarceration, or about $2,100 for each male high school graduate (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).
- For fiscal year 2007, President Bush requested a 4.8% decrease in discretionary spending for the Department of Education; in the same year the Office of Management and Budget estimated a 4.2 % increase for the federal prison system (Justice Policy Institute, 2007).	- Over their lifetime, the minimum public costs of criminal justice that would be saved by converting a high school dropout to a graduate would be at least $55,000 (Levin, 2007).
- About 47% of drug offenders do not have a high school diploma or a GED (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a).	- For juveniles involved in quality reading instruction programs while in prison, recidivism was reduced by 20% or more (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003d).
- In 2004, Maryland closed a $1.2 billion dollar budget shortfall for fiscal year 2003 by making significant cuts to higher education spending and K-12 education; at the same time the state appropriated new funds for prisons to accommodate the growing incarcerated population (Schiraldi, 2003).	- About 23% of the difference in incarceration rates between blacks and whites would be eliminated by raising the average education levels of blacks to that of whites (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).
- Between 1985 and 2001, Maryland's spending on corrections grew from $612 million to just under a billion dollars ($920 million in 2003-04) (Schiraldi, 2003).	- In Maryland, a 5% increase in male high school graduates, would result in a $211,427,220 benefit to the state's economy (Justice Policy Institute, 2007).

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School-Based, Out-of-School Time, and Collaborative Strategies to Close the Academic Achievement Gap between African American and White Students: A Review of the Literature

June 27, 2008

Prepared for Montgomery County Public Schools

by

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SECTION ONE: DESCRIBING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

I. Overview

Many have described the academic achievement gap as the greatest civil rights issue of our time. Despite the recent 50th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, educational equity remains an unmet promise for many African American students. This review of the literature presents a broad overview of the causes of the achievement gap, definitions and indicators used to measure the gap, and a comprehensive list of strategies for closing the gap in three domains: schools, out-of-school time, and collaborative efforts. While achievement gaps are evident in a range of racial and ethnic groups, this report focuses exclusively on the achievement gap between African American and white students.

The achievement gap between African Americans and whites starts at an early age and persists well into adulthood. African American students demonstrate significantly lower reading, math, and vocabulary skills at school entry than white students (Sadowski, 2006). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) found that by the 4th grade, students who are African American or from low socioeconomic backgrounds are already two years behind other students. By the 12th grade, poor and minority students are nearly four years behind (Robelen, 2002); roughly half of the gap evident among 12th graders is attributable to gaps that existed in first grade (Jencks & Phillips, 1998).

This gap is further reflected in high school graduation rates. While US Census data (2004) showed record highs in graduation rates among African Americans (80 percent) and whites (89 percent) in the 2003-2004 school year; data from other sources presents a different picture. For example, America's Promise Alliance (2008a) reported that nearly one third of all students fail to graduate from public high school with their class; among African Americans that rate is nearly one half. The gap is even more pronounced in metropolitan areas where graduation rates are far lower in inner-city schools compared to the surrounding suburbs. For example, researchers found that 81.5 percent of public school students in Baltimore's suburbs graduated compared to just 34.6 percent of students in city schools (America's Promise Alliance, 2008b).

Not surprisingly, the gap continues beyond high school. For example, among high school graduates, 71 percent of African American students go directly to college compared to 76 percent of white students (Haycock, 2001). The gap grows wider again when looking at college graduation, with 43 percent of African Americans graduating from college compared to 63 percent for whites (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2007).

Such persistent gaps ultimately lead to differences in income and socio-economic status, factors which underlie most critical social problems (Slavin and Madden, 2001). For example, compared to students who complete high school, those who drop out are more likely to be unemployed, in poor health, living in poverty, on public assistance, and single parents of children who, in turn, drop out of high school. On average, they earn $9,200 less per year than high school graduates and more than $1 million less over a lifetime than college graduates. Finally,

students who drop out of school are eight times more likely than high school graduates to be in jail or prison (America's Promise Alliance, 2008b).

Progress was made between 1970 and 1990 when the gap in reading scores decreased by 50 percent and in math scores by 33 percent. Yet in the years since 1990, the gap began to widen (NCES, 2001) and data released in 2000 indicated that the widening trend has continued. Sadowski (2001) reports:

> *While overall scores have increased in reading and mathematics, the differences in scores for black and white students in virtually every NAEP subject area and for every age group are greater than they were in the late 1980s. Perhaps even more disturbing, these gaps seem to be getting wider each year. Even when researchers control for socioeconomic status, level of parental education, and other factors that contribute to scholastic achievement, the score gap between white and black students persists, and no one is really sure why (p.1).*

Professor Dereck Neal (2008), author of an upcoming chapter, "Why Has the Black-White Skill Convergence Stopped?" to be published later this year in the *Handbook of Economics of Education*, states that the past 15 years of skill stagnation among African American youth and young adults has shattered optimism about the progress made leading up to 1990. The trends are particularly worrisome because education and job skills provide the foundation for success in today's job market. Moreover, the prospects of finding work after dropping out of high school tend to be less promising for blacks than for whites. For instance, among high school dropouts, blacks are half as likely as whites to be employed; however, among college graduates, there is little difference between employment rates. Neal encourages policy-makers and researchers to focus on early-learning environments, stating: "The first generation of black children who enter kindergarten with the same basic language and arithmetic skills as white children may well be the first generation of black adults to enter the labor market on equal footing with their white peers." (Neal, 2008)

Today, the pressure to close the achievement gap is greater than ever. The passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in 2002 now requires school districts to report annually on standardized test scores both in the aggregate as well as by race and by students enrolled in special education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and the free and reduced-price meals (FARMS) program. Individual schools, and school districts, face serious consequences if yearly progress is not made by each of these groups.

The good news is that many schools, school districts, and communities around the country are implementing innovative programs and strategies that aim to finally realize the promise of educational equity for African American and other minority students.

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is among the school districts that have placed renewed focus and energy on closing the gap. MCPS, one of the most diverse school districts in the country, has made closing the achievement gap a major priority since 1999. The 137,000-student school system, which educates students from more than 160 countries, has made ensuring success for every student the first goal in its strategic plan, "Our Call to Action: Pursuit of Excellence." MCPS has made significant changes to begin realizing this goal, including

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identifying and measuring specific expectations for student achievements, fostering achievement, removing barriers to learning, and promoting culturally competent school instruction and environments.

MCPS has indeed made encouraging gains in narrowing the gap between African American students and their white peers. For example, they significantly narrowed gaps in end-of-year benchmarks among kindergarten students between 2002 and 2006. In 2002, 56 percent of African American students in the red zone (less affluent areas) were at or above benchmarks compared to 65 percent of white students in the green zone (more affluent areas). By 2006, both groups had markedly improved and the gap had narrowed with 87 percent of African American students in the red zone and 90 percent of white students in the green zone reaching benchmarks (Panasonic Foundation, 2007).

These gains are also reflected at the high school level in terms of performance on High School Assessments (HSA), AP course enrollment and exam scores, and participation on SAT exams. For example, in the 2006-2007 school year, African Americans students had greater percentage point increases than their white counterparts on Algebra 1 HSA tests (12.5 vs 5.6) and English HSA tests (13.1 vs 7.8). Again in 2006-2007, fully half of African American students were enrolled in at least one honors or AP course, up from a third five years earlier. In that same year, 16 percent of African American seniors scored a 3 or higher on at least one AP exam, exceeding the 15 percent national average for all students. Also impressive is the 40 percent increase in the total number of African American students taking the SAT exam from 2001 to 2005, a number that continues to rise with MCPS's initiative to increase the number of college bound students (Panasonic Foundation, 2007).

While progress has been made, the ultimate goal is to eliminate the gap and, like so many other school districts across the country, MCPS is not yet there. The 2007 Maryland Report Card, for example, continues to show pronounced gaps between African American and white students on the Maryland State Assessment (MSA) from Grades 3-8 in both reading and math. At its narrowest, the gap reflected a 14 percentage point difference between African American and white students (4th grade reading); at its widest a 41.2 percentage point difference (8th grade math).

This report is designed to assist MCPS in identifying additional strategies and approaches to ensure that all of its students have an equal opportunity to succeed in school. We begin with an overview of the achievement gap and its causal and contributing factors followed by a description of multi-level approaches described in the literature that, taken together, may help to close the achievement gap at last.

II. Achievement Gap Defined

The achievement gap generally refers to the difference in academic performance among students, as categorized by race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status. While some researchers argue that there are multiple achievement gaps that expand beyond academics (Reynolds, 2002); others define the gap as the difference between where students should be academically to succeed in school and in life (e.g., 5th graders reading on the 5th grade level) and where they actually are (e.g., 5th graders reading on the 3rd grade level) (Education Law Center, 2005). With the implementation of the NCLB Act, discussion of the achievement gap has been focused primarily on the differences among students' standardized test scores in reading and math. Other measures used to quantify the achievement gap are illustrated in the table below.

Measures of the Achievement Gap – Beyond Grades and Test Scores	
• High school dropout rates	• Advanced placement enrollment
• Truancy rates	• College attendance and completion rates
• Disciplinary actions, such as suspensions	• Expectation of students' academic abilities
• Special education designations	and performance
• Future income levels	• Teacher quality
• Future employment	• Class size
• Incarceration rates	• Level of parental involvement

Sources: National Assessment of Educational Progress; Education Law Center

III. Causal Factors Contributing to the Achievement Gap

The factors that contribute to the achievement gap are numerous and complex. Some causal factors are within the purview of schools, while others encompass a variety of societal challenges that are beyond the control of the educational system.

A. Causal Factors within School Control

The causal factors within the control of schools, and school systems, are far-reaching and range in complexity from improving teacher quality to tackling the vestiges of institutional racism and social dominance. The following section provides a brief overview of these causal factors.

Teacher abilities and expectations

Teacher quality. Some of the best research on teacher effectiveness has been conducted in Tennessee where researchers found that students who had the most effective teachers for three

years in a row performed 50 percentile points higher than comparable students who had the least effective teachers for three years in a row. Indeed, the impact of teacher effectiveness on student learning was found to be the single biggest factor influencing gains in achievement; an influence greater than race, poverty, parent's education or any other factor studied (The Education Trust, 2004). Sadly, the effects of even a single ineffective teacher are enduring enough to be measured four years later, and even good teachers in subsequent grades are not enough to compensate (Haycock et al 2001).

Unfortunately, minority students are often the least likely to have access to high quality teachers. In fact, students in predominantly minority schools are about twice as likely to be taught by inexperienced teachers (Haycock, 2001) and to have teachers who come from less selective colleges and fail certification tests more frequently (Robelen, 2002). Experienced, high quality teachers are generally less willing to teach in underserved schools due to lower salaries, fewer resources, and more challenging environments. If they do choose to teach in such schools, they often leave after a few years for more supportive environments and higher salaries elsewhere (Ferguson in Jencks and Phillips, 1998).

Student-teacher relationships. Explicit caring creates the relationships, the "bonds" necessary to ensure learning for all students (Shannon, 2002). This is especially true for students of color "who place high value on the social aspects of an environment to a greater extent than do 'mainstream' children, and tend to put more emphasis on feelings, acceptance, and emotional closeness" (Delpit, 1995). In a large scale study among 7th-11th graders, Ferguson (2002) found that teacher encouragement was far more important to African American than white students when it comes to "working really hard in school." Strong student-teacher relationships are fostered by culturally responsive pedagogy whereby teaching and learning occur in a culturally supported, learner centered context that acknowledges and celebrates students' differences (Richards et al., 2006).

Low expectations. Compared to white and affluent students, research indicates that teachers often have lower expectations of minority and low income students. These low expectations impact teachers' determination to help students and students' drive to succeed (Ferguson, 1998). In other words, some students fail to thrive because schools do not ask them to or expect them to thrive (Haycock, 2001). For example, grading standards may be lower, and often less is expected of minority students in terms of quantity and quality of work (Gamoran, 2000; Knapp, 1995). This perpetuates the achievement gap by failing to encourage minority students to aim higher or take more demanding courses (Ferguson, 1998).

Ferguson (1998) reached five key conclusions about low expectations: 1) Teachers have lower expectations of African American students than white students; 2) Teacher expectations have a greater impact on African American students' performance than on white students' performance; 3) Teachers expect less of African American students because their past performance has been worse than white students; 4) Teachers perpetuate racial disparities by basing their expectations on past performance; 5) Simply encouraging teachers to change their expectations of African American students is not likely to have much of an effect (Ferguson in Jencks and Phillips, 1998).

Student perceptions and experiences

Stereotype threat. There is data to suggest that African American students can be so worried about seeming stereotypically ungifted that their anxiety impedes their performance. Steele (1999) defines stereotype threat as "the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype." In several studies, Steele found that when high performing African American students perceive a test as a measure of their abilities it activates in them a racial stereotype, provokes self-doubt, and lowers their test scores. Other data suggest that African American students may not perform as well in certain situations, such as in standardized tests, because they fear that others will think they are not smart (Jencks and Phillips, 1998). Ferguson found that African American students may be less likely to speak up during class because of the risk that others will think they do not know something (Ferguson in Jencks and Phillips, 1998).

Peer pressure. Research exploring the impact of peer pressure on the performance of African American students is mixed. Some researchers have described a phenomenon wherein low-achieving African American students criticize their high achieving peers for "acting white" (Ogbu, 2000). Other researchers argue that African American students are no more likely to lose their peer status for doing well in school than are whites. In fact, African American students self report an equal or higher endorsement of the statement, "My friends think it's important to work hard to get high grades in school" (Ferguson in Jencks and Phillips, 1998).

School policy

Less rigorous curriculum. Significantly fewer African American students are enrolled in higher level courses. A 2006 report by the Task Force on the Education of Maryland's African-American Males, for example, noted that only 1,229 out of 32,000 African American boys in the tenth to twelfth grades who were eligible to take an AP exam did so. Additionally, highly proficient students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have only a 50 percent chance of being placed in a high track class (Burris and Welner, 2005). This may occur because schools that have high minority student populations, or that are in high poverty areas, tend to offer a less rigorous curriculum and lack advanced course offerings (Kober, 2001). The lack of challenging coursework has far-reaching consequences as the academic rigor of courses taken in middle school and high school is the single most important predictor of college success (Kober, 2001).

Biased disciplinary practices. Research shows that minority students are more likely to face harsher discipline when they violate school rules. In San Francisco, for example, one study found that African American students were suspended from school at three times their proportion in the school population (Johnston and Viadero, 2000). In MCPS, African American elementary school students are nearly six times more likely than white students to be suspended (Office of Legislative Oversight, 2008).

Over-representation of minorities in special education classes. Data suggest that inequities exist in determining a student's need for special education, as well as in the services provided to these students once they are in special education (Losen and Orfield, 2002). Reynolds (2002) states that there are inequalities both in determining a student's need for special education as well as the services provided once a student is in special education. These inequalities contribute to the achievement gap.

Class size. While researchers do not agree on the impact of class size on minority student achievement, much of the literature does suggest that smaller class sizes may be useful from kindergarten to the third grade. A review of literature by Krueger and Whitmore (2002) on the effect of reducing class size on student achievement, found that low income and black students tend to benefit more from smaller classes than white students. In addition, the researchers found that participation in small classes also raised the likelihood that black students would take the ACT or SAT. Another research review found that reducing class size increased test scores, particularly in the early grades and for black students. While the benefits decreased after 3rd grade, some could be seen up to 7th grade (Jencks and Phillips, 1998).

School environment

Culturally relevant curriculum and climate. There is a relationship between academic achievement and a teacher's ability to connect curriculum to learner experiences and frames of reference (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Unfortunately, many teachers and school administrators have difficulty creating a school environment that incorporates students' diverse cultural orientations or learning styles (Maddahian, 2004). Teachers who lack the understanding or skills to respond to the diverse learning styles of their students may limit students' potential. Some researchers have argued that schools fail to take advantage of the cultural and personal assets of African-American students (Boykin, 1996). Professional development for teachers must include the infusion of culturally responsive content and skill development (Shannon and Bylsma, 2002).

Lack of positive school environment. Minority students are less likely to attend schools with good facilities and a well-controlled disciplinary atmosphere. Additionally, minority parents are more likely to report concerns about safety in the schools their children attend (Kober, 2001). Fiscally, there tend to be large difference between dollars spent per pupil in high poverty districts compared to low poverty districts (Reynolds, 2002). Those differences are roughly $1,900 in Illinois and $1,200 in Michigan (Robelen, 2002). Such differences amount to serious disparities throughout a child's school career. While the NCLB alleviates some of the disparity, high poverty schools need more intensive resources to put them on a level playing field with low poverty schools (Reynolds, 2002).

Ineffective leadership. Much of the literature cites strong leadership at the "building" level and higher as one of the most influential factors in closing the achievement gap (Howard, 2002). If students and teachers are not inspired and empowered by their principal, they struggle under the pressures of the achievement gap (Maddahian, 2004). However, when principals function as instructional leaders, working closely with teachers to help them improve through observation, feedback, and the collaborative refinement of teaching of strategies, they strengthen the core capacity of teachers to teach and to take on leadership roles themselves (USDE, 2006).

Institutional racism and social dominance. Many researchers believe that the achievement gap cannot be understood without confronting the issues of discrimination and racial and cultural bias. As Howard (2002) states, it is no coincidence that those racial, cultural, linguistic, and economic groups who have for centuries been marginalized by Western domination are the same groups who are now underachieving at disproportionate rates.

The legacy of racism and social dominance is evident in today's school structure, which some argue is rooted in white middle class values and expectations (Howard, 2002; Ogbu, 2003). African American students have consequently built up a resistance to white-centered school systems, resulting in poor school performance (Ogbu, 2003). Ferguson also observed a peer culture among some African American students whose behavior patterns seemed oppositional but were in fact on a quest for respect in response to centuries of subordination and disrespect (Ferguson in Jencks and Phillips; 1998).

B. Causal Factors within Community and Family Spheres

Children's lives do not begin and end within the confines of their schools. As such, many experts argue that the achievement gap can only be bridged if we address the larger social challenges faced by minority and low-income students and their families. The following section outlines many of the causal factors of the achievement gap that relate to family and community systems.

Family status and influence

Socio-economic status/family income. While differences in family income do not fully explain the achievement gap, studies have found that SES explains a greater percentage of variance in the achievement gap than ethnicity (Abbott & Joireman, 2001). The percentage of African Americans who live below the official poverty level ($18,000 for a family of four) dropped from 31 percent in 1973 to 23 percent in 2002, yet this percentage is still more than twice that of whites (Mishel and Boushey, 2003). If the official poverty level was raised to a more realistic basic budget of $36,000 for a family of four, about half of all African Americans and one-fifth of all whites would have inadequate incomes.

Poverty impacts important factors that can affect academic achievement, including nutrition and access to healthcare and the presence of educational resources in the home and community (Viadero, 2000). Duncan and Magnuson (2005) conclude that SES resource disparities predict about a one-half standard deviation of the test score gap between whites and African Americans. This translates into one-half to two-thirds of the total racial achievement gap in any study.

However, poverty does not explain the achievement gap found among more affluent groups of African Americans. In suburban areas where African American students are more likely to be wealthier and have parents with advanced degrees, the gap still persists. For example, "African American students with college educated parents score less well in 12th grade reading on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) than do their white peers who parents only have a high school diploma." (USDE in CSR Connection, 2003. p. 2).

Parental influences. In addition to family income, levels of parental education and involvement are cited in the literature as factors that may influence a child's academic success. Some researchers, for example, have found that parents from minority and low-income backgrounds may not be as insistent that their children succeed in school or enroll in advanced classes, and may not actively participate in school activities or help with homework as often (Johnston and

Viadero, 2000). Additionally, low-income families often perceive themselves outside of the school system and feel it is the school's responsibility to do the teaching (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997).

Yet when families and schools work together, students can achieve higher grades and test scores (Shannon & Bylsma, 2002). As such, schools that serve low income, ethnically diverse neighborhoods need to make greater efforts to welcome families to ensure that parents do not feel excluded due to their ethnicity, income and culture (Hoover-Dempsey and Howard, 1997).

Student mobility. Schools with higher concentrations of poor students experience greater student mobility, often due to a lack of affordable housing. Such mobility negatively impacts the children who frequently move schools and cannot keep up with their school work. Additionally, teachers must take time away from the rest of the class to help these students catch up (Viadero, 2000).

Lack of access to resources

Lack of access to quality early childhood education. Early childhood education programs can provide support to the home setting and help to ensure that children enter school ready to learn. Quality childcare and early childhood education positively affect a child's cognitive development. Yet minority children and children from low-income families often lack access to quality preschool and daycare programs (Kober 2001; Viadero, 2000).

Head Start, for example, does not serve children until age 3 or 4—too late, experts say, to compensate for the disadvantages low income children encounter. As a result, the achievement gap begins before children even enter primary school. One study found that economically disadvantaged African American children start kindergarten one year behind their middle class peers in reading and vocabulary (Evans, 2005).

Lack of access to out-of-school-time (OST) programs. High academic achievement is closely linked with exposure to family- and community-based activities and learning experiences that occur outside of school. Yet for most children of color, these opportunities are underdeveloped or unavailable (Gordon, 2005). Participation in OST activities can produce many positive, measurable academic, social, and behavioral effects in a child's life (Little and Harris, 2003). Additionally, OST programs promote academic achievement, provide opportunities to explore enrichment activities not available in school, and expose children to more hands-on, project-based learning (Harvard Family Research Project, 2005). OST programs provide a safe, supervised space for students to spend time outside of school and home. This safe space is critical given that students without supervision are at greater risk for truancy, stress, poor grades, and substance abuse (NIOST, 2000).

The availability of OST programming is particularly important during the summer months, when minority and low-income students often lose ground due to a lack of academic stimulation known as the "summer effect" (Viadero, 2000). This is because children from low-income families are less likely to have access to reading materials, and have fewer educational experiences during the summer (Phillips & Chin, 2004).

Lack of access to health care. A lack of adequate health care affects both children and their parents. Many children from low-income households have health problems that impede learning, such as vision problems and untreated dental caries. Additionally, parents in poor health cannot properly nurture their children (Rothstein, 2004). A high priority should be to establish health clinics or smaller dental or vision clinics in or near schools that serve disadvantaged children; an initiative that costs less than many school reforms such as class size reduction, and might result in greater increases in test scores (Rothstein, 2004).

Resource disparities. High-poverty communities may also impact students' opportunities for learning. For example, high minority communities may have fewer libraries, museums, youth organizations, and other institutions that support learning (Kober, 2001).

Additionally, schools in high-poverty communities tend to have smaller budgets, despite the fact that many of those students need more and different resources than students from low-poverty schools (Reynolds, 2002). Some argue that it is critical to provide these resources before holding students, teachers, and administrators accountable (Haycock, 2001).

Resegregation. Many public schools have experienced a "resegregation" to all-minority schools in recent decades. Students in high-minority schools often have less access to challenging coursework, high-quality teachers, motivated peers, and actively involved parents. Minority children are more likely to attend schools with high concentrations of poverty, which can depress achievement for all children in that school whether or not they are poor themselves (Kober, 2001).

SECTION 2: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

"We must invest in the whole child, and that means finding solutions that involve the family, the school and the community." (Alma Powell, America's Promise Alliance, 2008b)

To truly close the achievement gap, a multi-level approach is required to address the many causal and contributing factors that prevent too many African American and other minority students from achieving their true potential. The literature identifies three main levels of intervention: (1) school-based strategies; (2) out-of-school-time programs and initiatives; and (3) collaborative approaches that marshal the resources of school systems, local government agencies, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders. When taken together, these three levels of intervention map out an intensive and systemic approach to bridging the gap and ensuring that academic success is within reach for all students, regardless of race or income level. The Venn diagram below illustrates this multi-level approach.

Schools

Collaborations:

- Schools
- Out-of-School Time Programs
- Government
- Families

Out-Of-School Time Programs
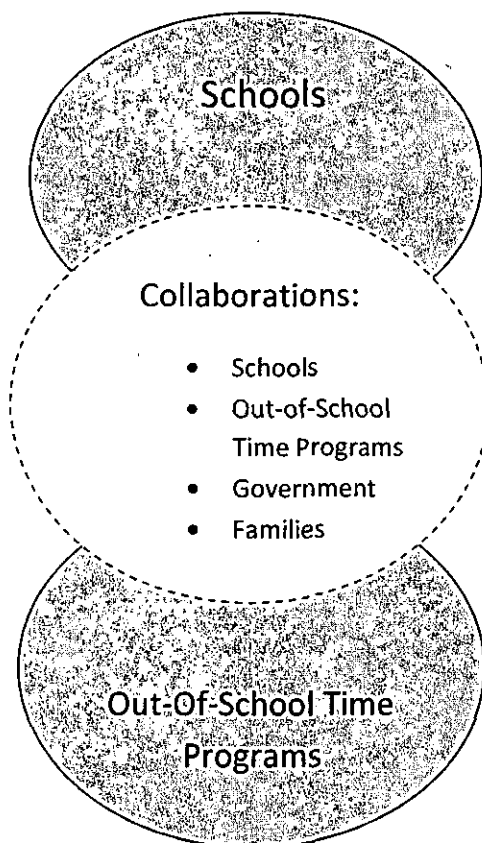
The multi-level approach to closing the achievement gap can be operationalized through specific sets of strategies within the domains of school, family/community, and school/family/community collaborations. The strategy lists in each domain were developed by identifying the core components of effective, evidenced based programs in the literature as well as culling through existing strategy lists and combining those into our best thinking about what would optimally serve Montgomery County. The following table captures the core school, OST, and collaboration strategies that resulted from this review; and that will be discussed in detail throughout the remainder of the report.

Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gap		
School Based	Out-of-School Time	Collaborative
Culture	1. Clear goals and objectives	1. Diverse stakeholder involvement
1. Mission driven		
2. High expectations for all	2. High expectations for all	
Professional Learning Communities/Team Model		2. Shared Vision
3. Effective school leadership	3. Staff quality/development and training	
4. Focused professional development		3. Data-driven decision making
Instructional Core	4. Caring relationships between staff/participants	4. Clear, effective leadership structure
5. High quality teachers		
6. Culturally responsive pedagogy/curricula	5. Link with school day	5. Effective communication
7. Academically demanding curriculum	6. High quality and continuous evaluation	6. Formalized sharing of information, data, and policies
8. Strong relationships		
9. Data driven		
Instructional Formats	7. Parental/family involvement	
10. Small learning environments		7. Secure funding sources
11. Individualized supports (tutors, mentors)	8. Community partnerships	
12. Extended learning time		8. Comprehensive programming
Collaboration		
13. Parent/family involvement		
14. Community involvement		

SECTION 3: MCPS STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

MCPS has made great strides in its efforts to close the achievement gap by employing many of the strategies described in this report, particularly at the school level. This section of the report outlines current MCPS approaches to close the gap. Cross walking the list below with the school-based strategies outlined in Section 2 can assist MCPS in pinpointing focus areas where approaches could be added or expanded in the quest to ensure academic success for every student.

I. School-based Strategies

MCPS has employed most of the school-based strategies outlined in this report, either at the school system level or within individual schools. The following is a brief overview of some of the key MCPS programs and initiatives that employ strategies identified in the literature as crucial to closing the achievement gap.

Strategy	Program description
Mission driven	**MCPS Strategic Plan: Our Call to Action** Closing the achievement gap is an integral part of the Strategic Plan. The first goal listed in the plan, for example, is to "ensure success for every student" by requiring that every student and group of students have access to rigorous curriculum and receive the support necessary to succeed academically. Other goals in the plan take aim at many other causal factors of the achievement gap, such as strengthening school relationships with families and community organizations and institutions, and recruiting, supporting, and retaining highly qualified teachers and support staff.
High expectations for all	**Honors AP Information Tool (HAPIT)** The Office of School Performance developed the Honors AP Information Tool (HAPIT) as a means for schools to quickly identify students who are not enrolled in honors/AP courses but have the profile to be successful. Guidance counselors and principals are expected to use HAPIT to access data related to course enrollment, PSAT performance, course selection, standardized test scores, grades, and overall grade-point averages **Participation in PSAT Exams** MCPS has set a goal of 100% participation on PSAT in every high school. Students who achieve certain scores on PSAT then have the potential to be in high-level, rigorous courses. In turn, participation in rigorous coursework will improve SAT performance.

Strategy	Program description
Effective school leadership	**Observing and Analyzing (OAT) Teaching Course** The OAT course is designed to train administrators to help sustain teacher improvement. The course examines knowledge of teaching, introduces administrators to MCPS professional standards, and develops skills in effective communication with teachers to promote improvement **Professional Learning Communities Institute** The mission of PLCI is "to increase student achievement and to eliminate the achievement gap in all PLCI schools." Schools apply to participate, and 10 to 11 schools are accepted into each cohort. Each participating school identifies a team of 12-15 school community members consisting of administrators, teachers, support staff, and parents. The cohort of school teams comes together for a full day of professional development every two months. In between full-day sessions, participating schools receive ongoing, school-specific support from the PLCI team via site visits, phone or email consultation. PLCI schools are eligible to apply for as much as $10,000 for Baldrige-Guided school improvement planning.
Focused professional development	**Staff Development Teaching (SDT) Project** The mission of the SDT program is to provide the training and job-embedded support necessary to ensure that every school has a high quality staff development teacher who can foster a professional learning community and to support effective school organizations. SDT supports the goal of building staff capacity to address system-wide and local school initiatives to increase student learning. **Diversity Training and Development for Staff** MCPS has established a Diversity Training and Development team that creates and implements workshops to develop cultural competence and trainings designed to change patterns of interaction in schools and classrooms. The program is based on the understanding that culture exerts a powerful influence on teaching and learning, and that we must engage, sustain and deepen "courageous conversations" about race and ethnicity. **Communicating High Expectations for All (CHET) Modules** Chet consists of six modules designed for teachers or administrators to use in small or large group settings, and are an online resource aligned with the MCPS Framework for Improving Teaching and Learning. The modules were developed using a blended instructional model in which some activities are intended to be delivered face to face and others online. The modules are accessed in the Blackboard learning management system (LMS) using features such as pre-assessment/post-assessment tools with feedback and discussion boards.

Strategy	Program description
High quality teachers	**Skillful Teacher Course** All teachers must take the 36-hour Skillful Teacher course, which emphasizes that all students can achieve high standards with effort, practice, and a carefully structured curriculum. The course focuses on collegiality and experimentation among teachers, helps teachers expand their instructional strategies, and promotes effective skills for peer support and observation. The idea behind the course is that for students to achieve high standards the workforce that powers the system needs to be excellent. Workforce excellence is the fusion of high expectations and an aligned and rigorous curriculum that is taught by content-competent educators under the guidance of strong leaders.
Academically demanding curriculum	**Development of Common Curriculum** MCPS has developed a common curriculum which has led to predictability, vertical alignment of content, and increased rigor. The curriculum is "homegrown," meaning teachers help to write curriculum and assessments that are aligned with both state and national standards. This common curriculum requires all schools to devote a minimum of 90 minutes to reading and 60 minutes to math for all students daily.
Data driven	**M-STAT** Developed through the Office of School Performance (OSP), M-STAT ensures a thorough analysis of relevant data, consistent and continuous monitoring, identification and dissemination of best practices, public recognition of exemplary school practices, and an effective decision-making process for lasting systemic change. Additionally, M-STAT explores the interrelationships between data, race, ethnicity, class, and student achievement; uses data to design and implement best practices to close achievement gaps; and monitors the key data points that lead to successful preparation for college and the world of work. **m-Class Reading 3D** This program is designed to help early-elementary teachers to improve their reading instruction through the use of Palm Pilot technology. Palm sync stations make data available immediately and can generate individual student, group, and classroom reports that can be shared countywide. Reading is assessed in two parts: 1) an automated version of the Assessment Program – Primary Reading (APPR) which looks at reading fluency and comprehension and 2) an automated version of the fundamental skills assessment DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills). The technology is currently being used at all elementary schools in MCPS.

Strategy	Program description
Data driven Contd.	**Rock View Elementary: Closing the Gap Initiative** This initiative is focused on performance-based grouping in which all students are placed in temporary, flexible groups based on reading and math ability for half of the instructional day. Every student is then closely monitored through a detailed system. Groups are adjusted regularly so that when they are ready, students move up to more challenging groups; students are never placed in a lower level as a result of adjustment. Students identified as "in the gap" receive 45 minutes of additional math and/or reading instruction each day. **Rolling Terrace Elementary School: Students Targeted for Aggressive Remediation (STAR) Catchers Program** The goal of this program is to increase math proficiency as measured by the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) by providing low English proficiency students extra support in test-taking strategies and math vocabulary as they relate to the test. The program is now open to all students in grades 3, 4, and 5 who demonstrate areas of weakness on formative assessments. Instruction is focused on higher order questioning, a repertoire of problem-solving strategies, student data monitoring using Data Notebooks, and student-to-student communication to expand math vocabulary and understanding. Students are actively engaged in monitoring their own progress and are immersed in a language-rich, math environment.
Individualized supports (tutors, mentors)	**Robert Frost Middle School: MSA One-to-One Advisory Program** The purpose of the MSA program is three-fold: 1) to address the school's improvement goal of decreasing the achievement gap between groups of students while increasing the school's overall achievement in math and reading; 2) to make a connection and build relationships with students; and 3) to support every student from every subgroup who scored in the "Basic" range on the MSA in reading and/or math. As part of the program, instructional staff members and volunteer parents are matched with students and tasked to regularly meet with students individually. During these meetings, advisors discuss academic interventions, provide suggestions for improvement, encourage the students through celebrations of small victories, and conduct ongoing academically centered discussions. Advisors are supported through staff development time focused on building relationships, analysis of data in intervention logs, reflections on student surveys, and expectations.
Parent/family involvement	**Parent Academy** The Parent Academy offers free workshops for parents and other family members of MCPS students. Workshop topics include: communicating with your child's teacher; navigating the school system; computer skills; bullying prevention; and high school graduation requirements. Childcare is provided for children ages 4 to 12. Interpreters are provided by request.

Strategy	Program description
Community Involvement	**Kennedy Cluster Project** The Board of Education and MCPS leadership in partnership with the County Council and the County Executive initiated the Kennedy Cluster Project for which this literature review is one component. The vision of the program is to support children, families and communities so that student achievement is no longer predictable by social determinants, such as race/ethnicity and socio-economic status. This exciting work has recently gotten underway to build collaboration and systems for collaborating across schools, county agencies and community organizations.

II. Out-of-School Time Strategies

Currently, Montgomery County offers a wide variety of afterschool and other OST programs that are run by schools and by outside entities and community-based organizations. However, there is a lack of centralized knowledge about these program offerings within any one organization. Additionally, there is no coordination at a school community level around programs that may exist outside the school setting serving the community (Collaboration Council, 2007).

The Collaboration Council is now developing a strategic plan to further develop and expand county OST programming in four main areas: (1) demand and capacity; (2) program standards and quality; (3) organization and professional development; and (4) finance and resources. The Council has already established the infoMontgomery website, an inventory of human services available in the county for children, families and adults to this end.

III. Collaboration Strategies

Collaboration strategies currently underway in Montgomery County include Linkages to Learning, a school-based partnership with MCPS and the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, as well as non-profit, community based service providers. The program's mission is to improve the well-being of children and their families by addressing the social, economic, health, and emotional issues that interfere with children's school success.

To this end, the collaboration provides prevention and early intervention services to at-risk children and their families in the areas of health, mental health, social services, and educational support. Such services include supporting students' adjustment to school, counseling, preventive health care and health education, workshops and classes on parenting and nutrition; assistance with food, utility, and housing problems; translation services; and assisting parents in completing financial and medical assistance forms.

The Kennedy Cluster Project provides an exciting opportunity for MCPS, county agencies, and community-based organizations to strengthen existing collaborations and to develop new collaborations in an effort to expand wrap around services for students and families in the continuing effort to close the achievement gap.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

When it comes to closing the academic achievement gap there is no magic bullet. Indeed, the strategies to close the gap must be as layered and complex as the factors that created it. This report reflects a summary of an extremely vast body of literature. The strategies described under the three domains of school-based, out-of-school time, and collaborations were selected because they emerged repeatedly in the literature as leverage points for closing the achievement gap. Although there are other strategies in the literature, we hope that the strategies and examples presented in this report stimulate thinking, foster dialogue and guide planning among a collaborative group of stakeholders in Montgomery County determined to close the gap.

We close with a few highlights and recommendations for stakeholders to consider as you move forward. The first is a general observation about the literature followed by key learnings in the school-based, OST, and collaborative domains.

1. When it comes to closing the achievement gap we know far more about school based strategies and successes than we do about OST; we know even less about collaborative approaches.

    Recommendation: Stay abreast of the literature. In the course of writing this document, new reports were coming out weekly. This is especially true with respect to research and evaluation of OST programs and collaborative efforts; areas still in their infancy and evolving rapidly.

2. High quality teaching is the number one school-based strategy to close the achievement gap.

    Recommendation: In the context of professional learning communities, provide ongoing, targeted professional development in the area of culturally responsive pedagogy. Such focused professional development has the potential to impact several school based strategies such as 'mission driven,' 'high expectations for all,' 'strong relationships,' and 'parent/family involvement;' all characteristics of high quality teaching.

3. Create OST environments that effectively connect families, communities and schools.

    Recommendation: Develop a system to identify OST needs and to leverage resources to meet those needs. For example, take inventory of current OST programs available in the county in both school- and community-based settings and assess the extent to which available programs/resources meet student and family needs.

4. It will take a truly collaborative effort to realize the vision "that student achievement is no longer predictable by social determinants, such as race/ethnicity and socio-economic status."

    Recommendation: Forge partnerships between a diverse group of stakeholders to prioritize strategies to close the gap. When selecting strategies, start small, stay focused, and utilize best practices. Then, develop collaborative systems and infrastructure to coordinate the planning, implementation, and evaluation of those strategies.
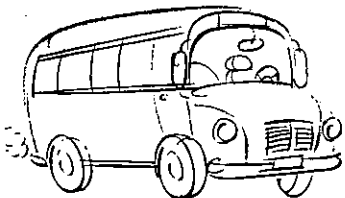
Wednesday, November 19, 2008
5:00 pm to 8:00 pm
Argyle Middle School Cafeteria

2400 Bel Pre Road, Silver Spring, Maryland

Raffle of 5 $50 Gift Cards For Groceries
Courtesy of
Mid-County Regional
Services Center

Transportation provided by MCPS

Come Learn About:
- Rental and Energy Assistance
- Food Stamps and Medical Assistance
- After-school youth enrichment and recreational opportunities
- Services for children with disabilities
- Health services for the uninsured
- And much more information on other services and resources

Raffle of 10 $20 Gift Cards For Groceries
Courtesy of
Community Action Agency

Bus Transportation and Schedule
The School Bus will pickup at the below seven stops and take you to Argyle Middle School. Then it will pickup passengers waiting to return to one of the seven stops from the schools. The bus will run the same routine continuously from 4:43 to 8:00.

Time Stop Location

4:43 P.M.   LAYHILL RD AND LONGMEAD CROSSING DR

4:50 P.M.   2941 HEWITT AVE - DRIVEWAY
4:51 P.M.   3331 HEWITT AVE (HEWITT GARDEN APTS)
4:55 P.M.   GRAND PRE RD- BTW - NORTHGATE APTS AND GRAND BEL
4:56 P.M.   3600 BEL PRE RD (GEORGIAN COURT APTS)
4:57 P.M.   BEL PRE RD AND WEEPING WILLOW DR
4:58 P.M.   3004 BEL PRE RD (STRATHMORE HOUSE APTS)
5:00 P.M.   ARGYLE MS 2400 BEL PRE RD, SILVER SPRING, MD 20906
And start the schedule over again!

Refreshments
Free Children's Activities & Books & Prizes!
If this information is needed in large print or other alternate formats, please contact
Luis Martinez at 240-777-1864, TTY 240-777-1295
If you require sign language interpretation, please notify us 7 days in advance.

The fair is a collaboration of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery Works, Montgomery Cares, MCAEL, Catholic Charities, Identity, Inc., Kensington Youth Services, Mental Health Association Rental Assistance, Emergency Services, PEPCO, WIC, Amerigroup, Maryland Physicians Care, Priority Partners, United Health Care, MC Police Dept., MC Recreation Dept., MC Dept, of Housing and Community Affairs, and other agencies.

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